



USAID
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ILLEGAL GOLD MINING

The illegal extraction of alluvial gold involves destructive processes that devastate the Amazonian communities, their forests and their ecosystems. USAID works together with the Government of Peru, local communities, Peruvian research organizations, private companies, and U.S. universities to address the threat of mining to the Amazon. The United States and Peru signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2017 to combat illegal gold mining, the first of its kind, and a demonstration of our strong bilateral partnership on shared priorities.

Over the last decade, Peru's fast growing economy was fueled by high prices in the mining, oil, and gas sectors. As gold prices climbed, illegal alluvial gold mining expanded into sensitive ecosystems in areas such as Madre de Dios, a biodiversity hotspot in the heart of the Peruvian Amazon. Illegal mining is a complex issue that threatens Peru's attempts to balance natural resource management and the health of local indigenous communities, with its continued growth and development goals. In partnership with Peru, USAID works with affected communities to rehabilitate affected land, promote legality in the sector (e.g. mining formalization) with social and environmental safeguards, and prevent the expansion of illegal mining into protected areas, indigenous lands, and other forested lands.

OUR WORK

RAISING AWARENESS AND STRENGTHENING SCIENTIFIC CAPACITY

Illegal gold mining decimates land, leaving behind barren landscapes polluted by mercury. USAID partners, with local and international organizations, to support environmental education and inform the

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public and policymakers about the impacts of illegal gold mining in the Amazon. USAID helps strengthen local scientific capacity to analyze the impacts of illegal gold mining in the environment. In alliance with Peruvian and U.S. researchers, USAID helped establish the first Mercury and Analytical Chemistry Analysis Laboratory in Madre de Dios. Additionally, the project promoted the use of drones for the analysis of deforestation and reforestation, and expanded research on impacts to critical ecosystems. Additionally, the project proposed the design of restoration alternatives for impacted areas due to illegal mining operations in Madre de Dios.

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

The victims of illegal gold mining include women and girls, and to lesser extent boys, who are subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking in mining camps. USAID supports advocacy, policy reform, and research to inform and strengthen the Government of Peru's program to fight trafficking in persons (TIP), most prevalent in Madre de Dios. Across the Amazon Basin, USAID has convened interregional conferences, trained 400 TIP care providers, and provided individualized legal and psychological support to 359 victims as of August 2020. USAID also supported the Ministry of Justice to publish a "Public Defense Action Guide" to improve the technical knowledge of public defenders to better serve victims. More than 550 public defenders have been trained in the use of this Guide.

PREVENTING AND COMBATING ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES

Illegal mining threatens protected areas and indigenous lands. USAID launched a new initiative to reduce threats to biodiversity in the Peruvian Amazon by helping Peruvian authorities and communities to more effectively prevent and address environmental crimes. This includes illegal gold mining, illegal logging and illegal wildlife trafficking in protected areas and their buffer zones, on indigenous lands, and in other relevant forest management units in the Amazon. USAID works closely with national and regional authorities to promote the prevention and reduction of illegal mining in Madre de Dios. An MoU has recently been signed with CITE Mining and Environment and Center for Amazonian Scientific Innovation (CINICIA) to promote innovative solutions including research, capacity building and engagement of miners in the use of better mining practices and mercury free alternatives. USAID is also promoting the use of environmentally sound mining closure procedures, mining formalization with social and environmental safeguards.

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